

**Interview with Aileen Wright  
Conducted by Mary Lipsey for the  
Providence District History Project Providence Perspective**

**October 25, 2007**

**[Recording starts mid-interview]**

**Mary:** her granddaughter. (Aileen's father was Henry Collins and her mother was Gladys Parker who was Paige Parker's daughter and Moses Parker's granddaughter.)

**Aileen:** Paige Parker.

**Mary:** Paige Parker's daughter.

**Aileen:** Yeah, so that's Moses Parker's grand's.

**Mary:** Granddaughter okay, alright, I just wanted to try and get the connection there. Well can you tell me about what school was like when you went to Merrifield Elementary?

**Aileen:** Alright well, I was a star. I mean I liked school, I always liked school, I wished I was in school now. And it was exciting and I learned a lot from specific teachers. We had a teacher named Miss Chavez who remarried and she was later called Coleman, Ms. Coleman. And she's the one that caused me not to chew gum now and ah was to stop chewing gum because she didn't allow to chew gum in school. And then she reenacted how everybody looked chewing gum. How some had different chews and it did look ridiculous though. I threw out my gum where I can. And then they had a program where once a week or once a month, I am almost 80 years old now so I can't keep these things.

**Mary:** I know.

**Aileen:** They had where they would bring a meal in – a wheat meal in and somebody in the community would make muffins for the school for the

lunchtime; if I am not mistaken I think it was once a week. But they would bake these like, I would, my mother would do it one week and then someone else's mother would do it another week and that's the way they did it. And then they would make these little cups out of news, out of not newspaper – paper folded up and give us convea(?) balls. We had that.

**Mary:** That was her medicine - herbal right?

**Aileen:** Yes, yes that's right.

**Mary:** And I assume that did not taste very good.

**Aileen:** But um I guess it helped us – I'm still here.

**Mary:** Was that grades one through eight in the same?

**Aileen:** No, one through seven.

**Mary:** One through seven okay and just African Americans?

**Aileen:** Yes, all African Americans. And in Merrifield there weren't but two there on Gallows Road right on that strip but two white families there and they lived on the opposite side. The other side was all African Americans. And on the other side it was two white families. Do you remember -

**Dennis Howard (Aileen's nephew):** Miss Anderson was one of them.

**Aileen:** Right.

**Dennis Howard (Aileen's nephew):** Gallows Road was the colored line.

**Mary:** Okay, now when you are saying which side, so it's on the side where the Silver Diner and the First Baptist Church of Merrifield.

**Aileen:** Yes, where the First Baptist Church all along that side that was our side.

**Mary:** Okay.

**Aileen:** The other side was the white side but I mean we didn't know any difference. We'd go through Robey's field, Mr. Robey lived directly across – I mean he didn't live his home was across further down the road from there. But he had this whole field that he - I think that is where they were doing their hay. I think that was on that field. But he had cress in the fall and we'd go over there and pick cress.

**Mary:** What is cress I am not sure what that is?

**Aileen:** Water cress.

**Mary:** Oh water cress okay, alright.

**Aileen:** Water cress and whatever was in season he would allow us to come over and get.

And then there was another family named – the family that had the residence on the farm Murray – well some of them used to say Mariah, some people would pronounce it more Mariah some said Murray, but I always said Murray. And then Mr. Anderson now we would go to Mr. Anderson and Mr. Anderson was the farmer and we'd go there and buy chickens, and eggs and milk and whatever we'd need you know we'd get from Mr. Anderson.

**Mary:** Okay, now tell me beyond seventh grade, did you continue education?

**Aileen:** Yes, I graduated from Merrifield Elementary and I went to Manassas Industrial that's what it was called then. We had to catch a bus and freeze - no heat, no heat on the bus. We rode the bus through McLean, Vienna um Centerville and we had to do all that picking up in route to the school. When they picked us up they had already been to Falls Church.

**Mary:** Okay

**Aileen:** And I never will forget that there was a guy named George Owens that always wore a fur coat in the wintertime and all the girls would break their neck to get to George Owens to sit in front of George Owens so they could stick their feet up in his coat.

**Mary:** To keep their feet warm.

**Aileen:** Yes.

**Mary:** How long a bus ride would that have been for you then?

**Aileen:** Oh, too long; cause I think we left home about 7ish 7 or 7:30 or something like that. I mean we would leave Vincent's Store. We had to be at the store in Merrifield to catch the bus. And school started at 9:00. So it was long. Maybe some of the younger ones could remember just how long it took because - but that was the only school that we had to attend cause we didn't have a school in the county.

**Mary:** Right. Now what was school like at Manassas Industrial School?

**Aileen:** I was glad when I graduated.

**Mary:** Okay.

**Aileen:** But ah sometimes you'd get to the school and there wasn't any heat. So sat on the radiators sometimes - take turns to get a little heat. But overall the teachers were nice. I never had a bad teacher; they were all very considerate and informative. I wanted to take typing but they did not have typing class, that's why I – it was mandatory that all my kids took typing cause I as a mom don't know how to type.

And so I took French and electricity (an electric class) and Home Ec. (Home Economics). Now in Home Ec., I didn't learn anything in Home Ec. because while the other children were learning I was making the teachers' dresses cause I had been sewing for years. So I was teaching the teachers.

**Mary:** Now was she paying you for this or was this part of your course work?

**Aileen:** No, no, no, no, she graded me on.

**Mary:** Oh really, okay.

**Aileen:** Um hum but when I graduated from high school, I never will forget this either, my dad had a stiff neck and he said that he couldn't make it to my graduation because he couldn't with a stiff neck. And I cried and he told me that I didn't have to come home - that he allowed me to go to this friend's house you know to get ready for graduation. And when they gave me my diploma and I turned around there was my Dad and I froze, I froze and I cried. But I will never forget that.

**Mary:** Was graduation in Manassas?

**Aileen:** I vowed to them that even though it was a piece of paper you won't have a problem out of me; and which they didn't. And they wanted to know – I excelled in Geometry and the principal, Reverend Barnes called and asked me how did I excel in Geometry and I don't know a thing about Algebra, to this day I don't. And I told him I couldn't explain it Geometry is drawing and that's what got my attention was the drawing so I did get it good in Geometry but put in Algebra and I don't know a thing about it.

**Mary:** In electricity you learned how to wire lamps and what did you learn in electricity class?

**Aileen:** Oh, we just learned the fundamentals, because I didn't take it more than one year. I learned the dangers and that you have to have something rubberized before you touch and so on and so on.

**Mary:** So you actually learned to be an electrician if you wanted to be – I mean that would be the end?

**Aileen:** Well no - I guess that I wanted to take something that I could use later on. Okay right now I can wire lamps you know, wire vacuum cleaners you know.

**Mary:** Wow.

**Aileen:** I learned that in that day but I was trying to find something because they didn't have typing. I was trying to find something that would benefit me later in years. And I I knew that if I learned electricity it was something that would save me some money cause I could do it myself and I wouldn't to put things in the shop.

**Mary:** You are right. Now I've heard that the Manassas School picked up people from Falls Church and Vienna and all that but they actually went all the way down to the Fredericksburg area almost? That the kids from

**Aileen:** Where?

**Mary:** That the kids for the Manassas Industrial School from all of Northern Virginia.

**Aileen:** Oh yeah, um hum, where is the Marine Base there?

**Mary:** Quantico.

**Aileen:** Quantico, yeah Quantico all down there - all black kids they had no other.

**Mary:** That was it or some went to Washington.

**Aileen:** Yeah, some went to Frances, Frances Junior High.

**Mary:** Okay.

**Aileen:** But you see I didn't want no parts of Washington cause I went to the Wormley School in Washington and I decided I didn't want to head back that way. I wanted to be with my family in Virginia.

**Mary:** Right, right. Well tell me about growing up in the Merrifield area, what did you do for fun, chores you might have had or anything like that.

**Aileen:** Okay, it was fun, Merrifield was a close-knit community – I mean we all - if one was hungry everybody was hungry. If one ate everybody ate you know they shared you know we did and we were the - my family was the first family, I never will forget this either, our family was the first family that had electricity you know to come to there. And ah none of us had telephones. We didn't have telephones not even when we left we didn't have telephones.

But my family had or my father was the first one to have electricity put in. I guess you know it couldn't be because some of them lived right on Gallows Road too. But anyway and one of my cousins one of the Charias(?) told me said when they finally got electricity they said na na na na na; your electricity is old, ours is new. That's the way that kids thought. (Both Mary and Aileen chuckling.)

**Mary:** Right.

**Aileen:** But um it was fun, we had swings and we went on bicycle hikes. And the road it was - I guess you would call it tar top but it wasn't that it was hard enough - we skated from 29 on up to Mr. Anderson's up to his grandfather's house which would be at the top of the hill over at Tinner Hill – that's where we started right? Called it Tinner Hill right?

**Mary:** Yeah, now you're talking about Lee Highway was a tar top or Gallows Road?

**Aileen:** Gallows Road. We skated on Gallows road; it was smooth enough and hard enough.

**Mary:** You didn't have to worry about traffic then.

**Aileen:** No, no - a car would come periodically and we would have to get off on the side of the road and wait for the car.

Our main thing was church. We were all brought up in church. We would go back to the church every day, every night and every week and I am thankful for it now. We had beach trips. Every summer my father would take us way down the country down to our Aunt's house and we might stay down there two or three days. We went on beach trips and to horse shows and what was that thing they had up in Manassas – Fair. The Fair and then he would rent – they use to have over here in Deanwood they use to have a place like a Carnival and he would bring us over there to - on a hillside I think it was right there at 49th between 49<sup>th</sup> and division Avenue.

**Mary:** Now you're talking about in Washington.

**Aileen:** Um hum.

**Mary:** Okay.

**Aileen:** But um, I wish I could go back to my childhood days. (Mary laughing) I really, and we lacked we didn't lack for anything. That was dunk and chew you know; my mother didn't work and we got everything that we wanted we were fortunate you know.

**Mary:** Right.

**Aileen:** Plus if my sister asked for something and I asked for something both of us would get two things that was to keep up from fussing over it.

**Mary:** Okay. Now you said that you sewed so did you sew a lot of your own clothes?

**Aileen:** Oh, I would make something nice to wear to school tomorrow.

**Mary:** Oh, really.

**Aileen:** Um hum.

**Mary:** Now did you teach yourself how to sew?



**Aileen:** They say that I was gifted because my mother - everybody in the Parker family sewed. You know all of the women I think sewed and everyone told me that I was gifted you know so because of my mom. Her mother died when she was 18 months old and she was raised by her godmother.

**Mary:** Wow.

**Aileen:** And I don't know my mother.

**Mary:** Right, so you just came by it naturally.

(Aileen's mother died when she was a baby and she was raised by her godmother.)

**Mary:** So you came by it naturally. What about chores in the evenings or after school?

**Aileen:** Oh, we had to keep our room clean and um wash dishes and we had slop jars then and we had outside toilets and you had to be sure they were put out in the morning.

**Mary:** You have to tell people what a slop jar is. That's when they didn't use the bathroom in the house and did it in the jar and they had to empty it in the morning.

**Aileen:** That's right and you had to wash it out too you know you couldn't just empty it and sit it there.

**Mary:** Yeah.

**Aileen:** Yeah we had a stick with a cloth tied around it and then some kind of disinfectant whatever kind they gave you - you had to wash it out and nd turn it upside down and then leave it sit out there till night time at night um hum.

**Mary:** Yeah, kids wouldn't understand.

**Aileen:** No, oh no no.

**Mary:** Did you have a telephone then?

**Aileen:** No we didn't have a telephone..

**Mary:** So if you wanted to communicate you talk about going to your Aunts house, how did you communicate with her?

**Aileen:** We walked there.

**Mary:** Okay, so you didn't call them and say I'm coming?

**Aileen:** No, no.

**Mary:** Indoor water did you have?

**Aileen:** No. We had a well and how else did we get water?

**Dennis Howard (Aileen's nephew):** Spring.

**Aileen:** Spring, yeah we use to have a spring down in the pines; but had wells.

**Mary:** Okay, how about ice skating or sledding in the winter time?

**Aileen:** Well we use to sled but ice-skating no. Now my father use to ice skate before he died, you know he died when I was seven. Now when I would be visiting there, you know I would stay for Christmas. I would go there in the summertime and at Christmas time. He'd throw them skates over his back and head toward the woods and I cried cause I thought he was going to kill himself you know on that little thing.

**Mary:** The blade, yeah. (Chuckling)

**Aileen:** I've never been interested in ice-skating and I cried every time he went ice skating cause I told him he wouldn't come back, you know cause he was gonna kill himself. But, we did a lot of sledding. We'd get a big barrel and make a bon fire at the foot of the hill you know. And ah we had a whole lot of hills to slide down. The ones that didn't have sleds would get a box and slide down in a box.

**Mary:** On the cardboard, yeah.

**Aileen:** Um hum.

**Mary:** Okay, now you mentioned how important the church was, what are your memories of the services and special things that they had at the church – this is First Baptist Merrifield?

**Aileen:** We use to have all kinds of programs we had children's day programs and even the graduations were in the churches then you know.

**Mary:** Okay.

**Aileen:** But when I graduated from the elementary school that was at the church. We were always in some kind of program. We had to sing or speak or you know had some part to learn in church. Now my sister and I we used to go around to different churches and sing duets. Since my dad was a (Aileen showed Mary a picture of her father) there's my dad right there, he had big ears didn't he?

**Mary:** Oh yes um hum.

**Aileen:** Right there. He was the head Deacon of the church; he had a lot of connections. People would always ask him about your daughters singing on our program you know. And, they use to have all kinds of things like a mock weddings and things like that to raise money for different organizations in the church.

**Mary:** Oh, okay.

**Aileen:** And I was in mock weddings and then they would have pageants and you know different things like. It was really fun growing up, there was never a dull moment.

**Mary:** Okay, what about Liberty Lodge, can you tell me about Liberty Lodge?

**Aileen:** You see that grown up stuff.

**Mary:** That was a little before your time.

**Aileen:** Now I did join when I did get old enough and was there long enough to join the Odd Fellows, but the Liberty Lodge was an older lodge and that was a hush, hush thing you know with the older folks. So I never was in the Liberty Lodge on anything that went on.

**Mary:** But was it like a service lodge, do you know – I mean did they help people or so you know?

**Aileen:** Oh yeah, they helped people like some of them people is buried down in the which um I think – like people that probably didn't have no money.

**Mary:** They would help them.

**Aileen:** And they would feed people that didn't have food you know. They were helpful but see back in them days the people, the older folks weren't out forward, I mean weren't forward or wouldn't speak to your children like we speak to ours, you know everything was hush, hush. Even homosexuals, we never knew nothing about no homosexuals even if there were homosexuals then you know. But we never heard anything about um because it was a hush, hush.

**Mary:** They was kept quiet.

**Aileen:** Yes, even your most intimate things there was a hush, hush about it. Just like when a girl's maturing, my mother never talked to me about that I thought I was dying. I crawled up in the bed.

**Mary:** The facts of life, right?

**Aileen:** Right, and um but she did tell me to talk to your cousin cause she's got something to tell you.

**Mary:** (Chuckles)

**Aileen:** But now I was playing ball you know and I know I didn't feel good and I went home and when I went to bed and I woke up there it was; and I got to hollering and screaming and here she comes she was all prepared, and I crawled back up in the bed you know. She said what's you doing up in bed for you get dressed for school. I said I can't go to school.

**Mary:** Right.

**Aileen:** You know things like that. And I don't think even the men even talked to the boys you know because I think it was too much too advanced for them. They didn't want to put something in their heads.

**Mary:** Right. What about Vincent's store you mentioned that you'd buy chicken and eggs and stuff from Mr. Anderson but what about Vincent's store what would you go there for?

**Aileen:** They had all that stuff but they had a little beer garden on the side where the drinkers you know.

**Mary:** Oh, so like a little bar or something?

**Aileen:** Yes.

**Mary:** Yeah, okay.

**Aileen:** A little bar – a little room where they would go in and but um - now I don't think that our - the blacks could go in and sit down. I think they could go in there and order but I don't think they could not sit down you know - but because now I was young too with that. And I remember Mrs. Vincent and Mr. Vincent I can see him just as plain but by me not having to deal with them. My father he did everything he cause my mother didn't work, he bought our clothes and just about every Sunday we had something different to wear to church okay. My mother didn't go out of the house.

He worked in Claredon so everything was available to him he'd pick - I do remember him taking us to buy shoes. Where he took us to get shoes, what was the name of that store Red Goose, I think it was Red Goose. Well anyway you had to put your shoe on and stick it in a thing that showed where your

**Mary:** Like a foot form.

**Aileen:** Yes, you could look down and see where your toes are in the shoes.

**Mary:** Oh, okay.

**Aileen:** But ah I was into shoes he didn't take us with him to buy anything. Now we'd be coming from Vincent's store or maybe coming from Falls Church into services in Falls Church he would stop in the store and we'd be back there - Daddy are you going to get us some ice cream and he would stop into Vincent's to get some ice cream. But before my father died I did go in Vincent's. Well my mother would send me down there for a loaf of bread or something you know; but as far as getting groceries or lingering around there I never did. But I remember my father, he liked wine and I guess he drank beer too, I don't know. But anyway, I remember him taking me to this store and put ice cream in each one of my hands. That was to console me while he went in there and ah into where they had the - where the men were. Okay I'm standing out there licking from one to the other. But I we really didn't have to go to the store that much. My daddy did have a garden but it wasn't one like on a farm he did it for a pastime. He'd a had a horse that he had to plow. But I think that he did that because he liked to

do it. I mean we ate out of it but he didn't have a whole lot. We had green beans, tomatoes, row potatoes or something like that.

**Mary:** Right, he wasn't growing it to sell it, but just for his family.

**Aileen:** That is right.

**Mary:** I heard that Vincent's also was the Post Office.

**Aileen:** Yes that's right um hum.

**Mary:** Was that the closest do you remember any other stores around the area?

**Aileen:** No

**Mary:** So that would have been it. If you needed anything that's it. You talked about not being able to be served there; do you remember any times because of being black that you were, you know had prejudiced against you?

**Aileen:** Well, you know kids don't really pay that much attention to that. I guess I have been but kids don't really cause the parents protect kids from those things you know or covered um up; you know kind of ride it over.

Because now we were taught and my mother's name was Annie, Joseph's wife's name was Annie and they didn't have any children so. But she taught us that there was only one race and that was the human race.

**Mary:** Oh, that's good.

(Remember that Aileen's godparents Annie and Joseph raised her when her mother died and Aileen was 18 months old.)

**Aileen:** And so we really weren't threatened now when they integrated the schools. My son that one I lost him in 204 two thousand and four – well all three of them are gone but I had to go to Fairfax and get him. They didn't

lock him up but I had to go up there and get him for fighting. And you know who he was fighting for – he was fighting for the white guy. The black guy was picking on the white guy and he was taking up for him you know. So I brought my kids up the same way that um - now I have a white daughter-in-law you know. I brought mine up the same way.

But that way of this girl the girl across the street - they lived on the other side of the road and she wasn't directly in front of me. But anyway she would come hold her head down. We'd be sitting on the porch, and she'd hold her head down to keep from speaking – the white girl. She wouldn't speak so one day my mother said Aileen, now what is that girl's name I've forgotten the child's name; but anyway she wanted to borrow my bicycle because she didn't have a bicycle. And she went to school over in Vienna no Dunn Loring she went to high school over there. But I guess she didn't want the others to know she didn't have a bike. So her friends from over there wanted to go on a bicycle hike and she didn't have a bike so she asked my mother, she didn't ask me, my mother could she borrow my bike. And my mother said she would have to ask me. Mary Ann I think her name was she wanted to borrow your bike – NO un un, no she's not going to borrow my bike. She don't even speak to me and want to borrow my bike. Mama said that's between her and God. She said um did you speak to her? I said no she holds her head down all the time so she won't have to speak. She said well no she would have to answer for that. I said well suppose she breaks my bike – we'll just buy you another one. So I ended up lending her my bike. The girl did the same thing after she used my bike. You know I wouldn't go out there and let them know that's my bike. You know I wouldn't do anything like that. But then after she got older she started speaking. But other than that I don't other than being on the bus.

**Mary:** Right.

**Aileen:** You know riding on the back of the bus.

**Mary:** Oh, you mean on bus transportation?

**Aileen:** Yeah bus transportation.



**Mary:** Okay, yeah cause that - was that the Arnold line in this area?

**Aileen:** The Arnold line ran up into

**Mary:** Into Arlington I knew that.

**Aileen:** Arlington.

**Dennis Howard (Aileen's nephew):** I remember that it ran up to Arlington on Lee Highway.

**Mary:** But you had to ride in the back of the bus on that.

**Aileen:** Um hum, um hum.

**Mary:** Yeah so well um.

**Dennis Howard (Aileen's nephew):** Excuse me what about the Trailways and Greyhound Bus Stations with the colored water fountain and colored bathroom on 12<sup>th</sup> and Union.

**Aileen:** I didn't frequent the station then, the only time I caught the Trailway's was like if I had to go to Fairfax, because I worked in Fairfax on Sunday's and I would catch the Trailway's from Vincent's store to Fairfax. But see I never went into

**Dennis Howard (Aileen's nephew):** D.C.

**Mary:** But that had you on the back of the bus to the Trailways.

**Aileen:** Yeah, um hum everything was the back.

**Mary:** Yeah, what do you think has changed the most let's say from your childhood until today, if you had to say the biggest change you've ever seen would be?

**Aileen:** What do you mean – overall?

**Mary:** Overall, yeah.

**Aileen:** Everything is in the open.

**Mary:** Okay, people are more open about talking about things?

**Aileen:** Yes, yes, yes. And then too – like if you are prejudice I would like for you to show me prejudice or let me know that you prejudice; I know how to deal with you. You know I can deal with anybody you know, but rather than to grin in my face and then you know.

**Mary:** Say things behind your back yeah.

**Aileen:** Right. But it's more open even with the kids it's more open their teaching more in schools. And ah things are just more outward.

**Mary:** Now you think that's good or bad? Sometimes changes can be bad.

**Aileen:** I think it's good.

**Mary:** Okay.

**Aileen:** I think it's good, I think it's good because okay when I came now I got pregnant out of wedlock because I didn't know any better. Now the kids now a days they don't have any excuse cause they are taught these things you know.

**Mary:** Right, right.

**Aileen:** And then I didn't even know really didn't even know what you did you know to get pregnant.

**Mary:** Yeah.

**Aileen:** You know but I I think it is better. But then they'll make the same mistakes you know.

**Mary:** That's true, that's true.

**Aileen:** But I only had the one and I married his father and had six more.

**Mary:** Wow.

**Mary:** What about medical care if you got it at all, I know you're talking about midwives so say a child

**Aileen:** That was the only time I had a midwife with me when they were born but she delivered all of us. She delivered Calvin Hayes. She was the Patriarch of the family during that time. But um, no we went to the doctor, Dr. Johnson. You know Dr. Johnson.

**Dennis Howard (Aileen's nephew):** Falls Church.

**Aileen:** Um hum Dr. Johnson that's who – we went there periodically. He'd have his standard office time and he'd checked out, see if your heart's doing all right and all that stuff. We had to go to the doctor periodically.

**Mary:** Was that near Hillwood Avenue or where was he located?

**Aileen:** No, he was um

**Dennis Howard (Aileen's nephew):** Annandale Road 50 and Lee Highway near the Second Baptist Church.

**Aileen:** 50 and Lee Highway um hum.

**Mary:** Okay, right and so did he ever make house calls?

**Aileen:** Oh Yes he made house calls but he didn't make that many. Um who was the doctor that use to make the house calls? He was from Arlington.

**Dennis Howard (Aileen's nephew):** Padomic.

**Aileen:** No Padomic was in Falls Church. I think Padomic made house calls too. But I was going through a phase then there was a Dr. Smallwood that was before my time I guess but he use to make house calls.

**Mary:** Now if anybody had to go to a hospital, there was no Fairfax Hospital.

**Aileen:** No wow.

**Mary:** So where would they go to the hospital?

**Aileen:** Well my kids were born in Howard University, which was Freedman's then.

**Mary:** Okay, so that was downtown in Washington?

**Aileen:** No it's not down town.

**Dennis Howard (Aileen's nephew):** Howard University.

**Mary:** Okay alright.

**Dennis Howard (Aileen's nephew):** 7<sup>th</sup> and U.

**Mary:** Okay.

**Aileen:** Um now I had one that was born in Alexandria, the last one was born in Alexandria; but the rest of them - one was born at home with a midwife and the other five were born in Freedmans.

**Mary:** Do you have any memories of the Liberty Cemetery over there in the Pines?

**Aileen:** Oh yeah, there wasn't but three of us that use to frequent that cemetery every year; my cousin, Helen Haight's sister, Ruby Williams, my

sister and I. The three of us would be dragging across them fields with flowers, people's gardens and things.

**[Recording paused]**

**Mary:** So the Pines, you'd crossed the fields carrying flowers.

**Aileen:** Oh yes, we went across peoples' garden and climbed the barbed wire fence to get into the cemetery. Every year the three of us and our children strung along behind us.

**Mary:** And how many generations are buried there do you know? I mean how far back does it go?

**Aileen:** Well I know my grandfather is buried there, and so I don't know if there's anyone else that was buried there before. My friend had all the records of that. You got um now.

**Dennis Howard (Aileen's nephew):** Post Civil War.

**Aileen:** But I think my grandfather, his generation was the first buried there. There are not that many graves over there.

**Mary:** Right. I know at one time the county condemned the property and was gonna make a school there is what I read.

**Aileen:** Yeah ah um. Well my cousin had to move, they took his property and they wanted to build a school and it never happened.

**Mary:** They never built it.

**Aileen:** And that's when my son started fighting for the cemetery.

**Mary:** How many if you had to say how many homes were in the Merrifield area and how many were in the Pines, do you have any idea? I mean people might want to know is it 50 is it 100?

**Aileen:** It wasn't 50 not in the Merrifield area, it wasn't 50.

**Mary:** Okay.

**Aileen:** It was under 50 but in the Pines no it wasn't 50 there either; because the Pines were more spaced out than Merrifield. Um the Pines were more of an heir property. Okay my father had property, and then his brother, my fathers father he had property and his brother he had property and so they were spaced out.

**Mary:** Okay, so were they farmers down in the Pines?

**Aileen:** Well I wouldn't say – I know that we had chickens, and geese and ducks; and my Aunt the midwife she had geese, chickens and ducks and she had a little garden but I wouldn't say it was what you call farming.

**Mary:** Oh, okay.

**Aileen:** They didn't farm to sell, you know just for supplies.

**Mary:** Supplies for themselves.

**Aileen:** Um hum, right.

**Mary:** Now your family does it go back to slave times, can you trace your family back to slaves?

**Aileen:** Yeah, Moses Parker.

**Mary:** Okay, and he was

**Aileen:** Now on my father's side, my grandfather was a slave but I hadn't dug into that you know we been really focusing on the Parkers, but yeah there was some slavery.

**Mary:** Right. Alright, is there anything you would like to share with us? Think of anything that I might not have asked you?

**Dennis Howard (Aileen's nephew):** We can trace the Collins

**Aileen:** Yeah to your – but as far as names and all that see I

**Dennis Howard (Aileen's nephew):** He's in the book Shades of Blue.

**Aileen:** Hum.

**Mary:** What about was do you remember any events – like was the great depression do you remember anything about that time, or World War II or?

**Aileen:** Ah you know when they were rationing things, when was that?

**Mary:** Yeah.

**Aileen:** That is the only time that stands out in my mind, but I guess I don't remember all this because it didn't affected me you know. I wasn't affected by all that even when they were I still have my dad's gas rationing card. It affected me more when I got grown and couldn't buy stockings – remember.

**Mary:** You couldn't buy what?

**Aileen:** Stockings.

**Mary:** Oh stockings, okay alright because the nylon or silk was rationed yeah.

**Aileen:** Yeah um hum.

**Mary:** Yeah, yeah sugar was rationed and gasoline.

**Aileen:** Right everything was rationed.

**Mary:** Yeah.

**Aileen:** Um hum but by it not affecting me, I wasn't driving during that time you know and I was still eating I mean I didn't see no less food on the table.

**Mary:** Now you said you worked in Fairfax at one time, where did you work?

**Aileen:** You don't have time.

**Mary:** Oh, okay.

**Aileen:** I worked at the a I worked at when I was catching Trailways well I worked at um it was a hotel – it's gone now – it was a motel up on 50 that I went up there and did – see um everybody knows and it's in the book. I didn't have a good marriage so I had to more or less support my kids myself you know. I didn't have um I married a man but I didn't have a husband do you know what I'm saying.

**Mary:** Alright.

**Aileen:** So I had to do all this extra work - work extra jobs and things so that was one of the extras. I've even worked at the Red Cross building in Fairfax. You know where that is.

**Mary:** Yeah.

**Aileen:** I worked there I use to buff the floors at night. That was one of my three jobs that I had during the day. So I've even worked in a shoe shop after I got off in the dry-cleaning Department I worked in the shoe shop in King Curly's Dry Cleaners you know. Wherever I could I did everything I could to raise my kids properly like that you know. I've done had a lot of menial jobs you know and I worked at Fairfax Hospital, I worked in the lab. I use to help assist in performing autopsies. And um it was I mean the hours were too long I needed to spend time with my kids so I had to get another job that I was off on the weekends. I had to work weekends there. So I got a babysit I got a Nanny's job and that's where I worked until, I think I was yeah, I was still working there when I moved to Maryland cause I



moved to Maryland in 67 and I was still working there. When I left there I went to Unisys which is Raytheon and for Melpar.

**Mary:** My brother use to work at Melpar which was before Unisys.

**Aileen:** Melpar that's where I worked at Melpar.

**Mary:** Yeah, well if you could give any advice to young people today what would it be?

**Aileen:** Oh boy, ah concerning?

**Mary:** Anything that you'd like to say.

**Aileen:** Well you have to work for what you get. I mean nothing is given to you on a silver platter. When you look around it may look like people is given things on a silver platter but you have to work hard and be focused and integrity have integrity that's the main thing.

**Mary:** Okay.